

Violentine's Day

(Making the link between Valentine's Day and Violence)

Project: Violentine's Day (what is the price of Love?)

Medium: Exhibition, public interventions, graffiti, interactive performances, documentary film screening, and public discussions.

Objective

The goal of "Violentine's Day" is to raise awareness about how our everyday lifestyles are tied into the global economy. Using the means of art to investigate the reality behind Valentine's Day, this project will make clear how consumption habits in the Global North can have destructive impacts on people and ecologies in other parts of the world. Following the roses sold in Europe back to Kenya, where they are grown, helps us to see how even small consumer decisions can strongly impact the lives of others.

The project will take place in Geneva, Switzerland, Cheminée Nord: Association d'artistes / ex-usine kugler, on 14 February, Valentine's Day, in collaboration with artists and others from various fields.

Concept

Traditionally, lovers express their affection for each other by offering gifts and tokens. Valentine's Day is the recognized calendar day for the romantic celebration of Love. On that day, giving is made especially convenient. Cards and flowers are on ready display, and only neglectful lovers fail to purchase some for their beloveds. The red rose, with its long cultural and literary heritage, is the unmistakable symbol of Love.

But where do the roses come from? Who grows them and where? How do they get to the flower stand on the corner? The Violentine's Day art project investigates these questions. Valentine's Day is a big business, and hidden within corporate boardrooms and behind free trade rules are destructive social and ecological costs that the lovers of Europe are seldom asked to think about.

Most of the roses consumed in Europe come from Africa (primarily Kenya), and are produced in factory farms located next to large freshwater lakes. And yet how can a country like Kenya, one of the largest producers of flowers for export, also suffer from severe food shortages? The Violentine's Day project aims to generate awareness and discussion about the problematic aspects of this trade.

Locally, rose production creates many problems for Kenyans. Wages in flower factories are higher than the government mandated minimum wage. However, many health and ecological costs are not reflected in the wage relation. To uncover the real social price of the roses of Valentine's Day, it is necessary to dig deeper. First, roses need large quantities of water (like humans, roses are 70% water). Pumping water from lakes diverts available supplies from

local small-scale farmers, and desiccates the local environment. Secondly, factory farming requires large quantities of pesticides that contaminate the aquifer and pollute neighboring environments. Finally, rose production is problematic for the workers themselves because of the high concentration of dangerous chemicals in pesticides. Often, workers handling chemicals are not provided with protective clothing, re-entry periods are not consistently respected, and pregnant women have been exposed to dangerous levels of chemicals. In addition, the lack of overtime payments and many other labor problems also directly result from our desire to say, "I love you". So, one can easily say that the more Western people express their love by buying roses, the more those in exporting countries like Kenya suffer.

"The ecology of terror shows us the path to peace. Peace lies in nourishing ecological and economic democracy and nurturing diversity. Democracy is not merely an electoral ritual but the power of people to shape their destiny, determine how their natural resources are owned and utilized, how their thirst is quenched, how their food is produced and distributed, and what health and education systems they have."

Vandana Shiva, "Water Wars"

The Valentine's Day project will debate the question: What we feel and are willing to do, once we become aware of this.

Multidisciplinary artistic research and practice

Participants: Vana Kostayola, Valério Belloni, Agata Nowak, Maciej Koper a.k.a. Doctor Koper, Tomasz Hanke a.k.a. DJ Tom Hanks, Anna "diabolic laughter" Karłowska, Elene Georgia Naveriani, Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze, Dadu Magradze, Orfeo, Yael Maim, Maëlle Cornut, Laurence Wagner, Gene Ray, Daniel Stain, Melano Sokhadze, Giorgi Kevlishvili.

Dan Stein

Dan Stein lives in Geneva, Switzerland a member of the Bezdomny Art Collective. When he is not traveling the world engaging art and cultures he can be found providing communication service to NGOs and International organizations. He is currently recovering from a short stint researching the inner workings of the corporate world, which he will eventually transform into something artful.

He is fascinated with how art is a manifestation born from the dreams and conscience of cultures and societies often foretelling the present and future movements of collective thought. He is currently involved in community rain dancing for the association taurdunum. A photographer and artist, his performances and pieces have been exhibited throughout the USA, Europe, and the Middle East. His last exhibition/performance was entitled "No babies to kiss in this small town?", which chronicled his experience, running for political office (mayor of a small town in Idaho) as a matter of art.

If objects could speak

The globalization of markets and proliferation of mass production have increased the physical and mental distance between the origin of an object and its final use and destination. How often do we ask ourselves the question, 'where and how did this object come to be?' An

object is no longer understood for where it comes from, but for what it represents. The growing gap between an object's personal history and symbolic context creates a powerful and disturbing duplicity. For example, a poor laborer enduring dangerous work conditions to harvest a rose that ends up in the hands of one lover to another. How are we to reconcile an object's symbolic value with its life story? What does the mass (re)production of objects mean to their symbolic significance?

Vana Kostayola

Vana Kostayola is a new media artist. Her projects explore issues of contemporary corporate labor relations and environments, new theories of management and the jargon of corporatism, the cultural hegemony of New Age discourse, the return of nationalism in contemporary Greece and the Balkans. In collaboration to K.Stafylakis, they often use practices of "over-identification" to disclose the latent ideologies that determine the political consensus of Greece's contemporary public life. Their projects presuppose periods of research and field-work on the discursive practices of social groups. The final stage of their exhibitions/performances is often a re-composition of existing elements rather than an entirely fictional narrative.

She holds a BA from Athens School of Fine Arts, an MA in Fine Arts and an MA in Interactive Media from Central Saint Martins College and Goldsmiths College respectively. She worked in various projects in art education. She collaborates with theatrical and dance groups as a video installation artist. She has organized art interventions in public space in Athens and London, and has realized solo exhibitions in Athens and group shows amongst them: the XII Biennale, Naples; Goethe-Institute, Thessalonica; Salon Contemporary, London; Boots Contemporary Art Space, USA; the ATTITUDE video festival, FYROM., in the conference of the New Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis, Geneva;

Where do they come from?

A presentation of labour issues in the flower market and Valentine obsession

Ton van Zantvoort

Ton van Zantvoort was born in a small village in the southern Netherlands in 1979. After the design education he graduated in 2003 with credits at the Akademie St. Joost in Breda. With his graduate film "Khamu Village" he got in the "top 10 of the best student films" on the Dutch Film Festival (NFF) in Utrecht. Also his short series of "Items" about the abalienation of and the contrasts in the reality played on several big international film and art festivals in the world. In 2005 he was in South America for 5 months to make a triptych of films. GRITO de PIEDRA the longest of the three, had its world premiere on IDFA 2006. In that same year he was also nominated for the NFTVM award: the award for best new Dutch filmmaker. In 2009 he finished his second feature documentary a BLOOMING BUSINESS that became a coproduction with the VPRO. The film screened on more than 50 international film festivals and won many awards such as the Dok Leipzig Healthy Workplaces Film Award (Germany), Cinema Planeta jury award (Mexico), FICA press award (Brasil), Millenium Festival Audience Award (Belgium).

a BLOOMING BUSINESS

a BLOOMING BUSINESS is a poetic, cinematic and award winning documentary about people in Kenya who are imprisoned by the power of the global flower industry. I worked very hard for the last 4 years to make this film independently, spending my own money, and risking many things.

The film won important awards such as on DOKLeipzig the Healthy Workplaces Film Award (Germany), the Cinema Planeta jury Award (Mexico), Press Award on FICA (Brasil), Audience Award on the Millenium Film Festival (Belgium), Best Photography Award and Best Documentary award on International TV festival Bar and is already screening on more than 50 big International Film Festivals (such as Thessaloniki Documentary Festival, Edinburgh International Film Festival, International Film Festival New Zealand, Vancouver International Film Festival, Planet in Focus in Toronto, etc) The film is subtitled in 22 languages.

Giorgi Gago Gagoshidze

He was born in 1983, 7th of august in Kutaisi, Georgia.

in 2007 he graduated Tbilisi State Academy of Art. during being student in Georgia he used to work together with other art students as an art group lott. he is one of the founder of group Creatorea and publisher of internet magazine someoneistyping (<http://someoneistyping.blogspot.com/>)

2008-2010 had been studding in Royal academy of Art In The Hague, Holland. Now lives and works in Berlin

Dadu Magradze

Was born in 1988, 15th of August in Tbilisi, Georgia

Since 2008 she is a studding of Tbilisi State academy of Art on the graphic department and in this 2010 year she is making her 4th graduating year. her main working medium is a painting /water colour.

She lives, studies and works in Tbilisi, Georgia

Authore of the poster.

Gene ray

Gene Ray received his PhD in philosophy from the University of Miami in 1997. His thesis was on "Terror and the Sublime in Art and Critical Theory" (Palgrave, Macmillan 2005). He studied philosophy, compared literature and art history (Film and Media Studies). Since then he has done postdoctoral research in Berlin as a German Chancellor's Scholar of the Alexander Humboldt Foundation. He taught for many years in different universities and academies in Europe and in the United States. He is a collaborator of the journal "Third Text" and "Radical Philosophy" (London) and his essays have appeared in "Yale Journal of Criticism", "Afterimage", etc. He is intensely interested in the cultural practices aligned with movements and struggles for radical social change. He is also led to deeper engagement in

tactical media and the Internet, institutions and “criticality”, interpretation of contemporary capitalism and the complex history of the Marxist tradition.

Elene Georgia Naveriani

I wonder if I come from working or middle class family. It’s so difficult to define what could be considered as my past social background, because of the big turning-point in 1991 – turning-point that divided my family and me in time, as those before and those after 1991. This country started to be totally different in 90s (when I was growing up with a bit of awareness of life conditions) from Georgia before 1990, where my parents shaped and formed that division makes me a bit puzzled and confused.

Even though, I was 6 years old when Soviet Union collapsed, I’ve seen and felt (maybe unconsciously) a big refraction in both: general conditions of life, as well as in life of my family. This is the basic reason I am asking myself this question today. My conscious social life, with and next to my family, has just started in times when their mode of life definitely changed. They quickly learned how to behave as an usual working class family. Getting into the school, and after into the university, wasn’t being considered as such an unattainable point. I grew up in the atmosphere of conviction that education is important to survive and to get somewhere in your life. In the same time, I was surprised seeing all members of my family not “surviving” enough, with their expensive, precious education. They were catching every opportunity that was coming across, to survive. Every work was valuable if there was a chance for some income, which merely fed and heated us.

I’m mentioning all of this, because I was getting more and more convinced that it is so much better to have a sort of instinct of self-preservation coming from everyday life and experiences, than the actual academic education.

However, I finished my high school with this skeptical attitude and I got into Tbilisi State Academy of Art 2002.

I spent 4 years in the Academy, where I met people with whom I was working and learning how to live. We established an art group and that came into fruition with whole bunch of great experiences. After the graduation in 2006, I’ve decided to leave behind the place I used to live. Two years and lot of complications after, Swiss embassy gave me a visa. Now, I’m a

POSTCARD FROM THE FAR AWAY

A postcard is a rectangular piece of thick paper on thin cardboard for writing and mailing without an envelope. People uses postcard in a different occasions, it is used for a positive wishes for the Christmas, new year, birthday, the valentines day, marriage, first baby birth, and greetings form the holidays. So, mostly we use to give positive emotions and to show our attention each other’s. In this particular situation I’m going to focus on the day, which celebrates love and affection between intimate companions. It is traditionally a day on which lovers express their love for each other by presenting flowers, offering chocolates and all kinds of sweets, and sending greeting cards. I’m will create postcards for this particular day. I will use images, which are taken from websites and texts from popular post cards. my will is not to invent something new , use the material which is already in our life and just make a comment on it. Postcards will be positive representation of our reality.

FLOWER EXPORT-IMPORT MAPPING

This project will map indications of the places from were flower are imported or exported.

This project will show spectators the scale of this problem, and in this way row global problem and pay to it attention.

Agata Nowak

Born in 1984. Polish. Master of Psychology, hopefully up-coming Master in Critical Curatorial Cybermedia at Haute Ecole d'Art et de Design in Geneva. Her research focuses on her own generation and question of storytelling. Her chosen art domain - illustrations and comics. To survive in Switzerland she spends almost every free-of-school day at the airport, working as a shop assistant. Other occupations: collaborative freelance as journalist, columnist and designer mostly for non-profit organizations.

La Vie en Rose

The installation is presenting a contemporary illusion of so-called "good life", with seemingly insignificant details symbolizing the background reality. "La vie en rose", which is impossible to achieve without exploiting someone else, more or less consciously. The sound brings into the work a different layer - layer of the common ignorance. Only by approaching the work and focusing on the details, spectator is able to reflect on the whole piece and question this illusory comfort.

Collaboration with: Maciej Koper a.k.a. Doctor Koper, Tomasz Hanke a.k.a. DJ Tom Hanks, Anna "diabolic laughter" Karłowska,

Laurence Wagner

Laurence Wagner is born 1984 in August, the month of the aoutat (little insects who appears only in august). Is she also an aoutat ? Maybe, but with a quite longer month experience. She grows up in Switzerland in a little boring town next to a beautiful lake. As parents she's got a protestant honest Swiss father and a lovely brilliant Chilean mother.

After a chaotic scholarship, Laurence decide to go to the university to make her parents happy. It has been really horrible, but she's got a Bachelor Degree that she can mention in her CV and she became there conscious that she wanted to be an artist and work with performance. So she applied to a Master degree in an Art School (HEAD) and she has been received in the CCC Master Program in Geneva.

Now she's happy working with performance doing some research about art and gender and trying to be an artist. Her motto is « don't forget to be in the middle » as Gilles Deleuze advices against the temptation of hermetic elitism.

THIS IS NOT A LOVE SONG

The performance This is not a love song will be presented in the context of the project « Violentine Day » which will take place on February 14th 2011 in Usine Kugler, Geneva.

It will be a performance in two parts. The first one, will be a kind of performative lecture of an interview by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida about love. I will replay the interview by myself in acting the journalist and the philosopher at the same time (5-10 min).

The second part will be a love song where the words are replaced by screams. It means it will be a music playing (« Je t'aime » by the cheap singer Lara Fabian) and I will shout the melody (around 5 min too).

This performance is not directly talking about the roses trades but rather on how we talk about love with words. How we explain a feeling with words? How we build scientific discourses about love? How we try to explain it and how we try to express it ? are words enough ? and what does the neoliberal euro centrist system do with such a feeling? This is not a love song is a cry of pain against the violence and the emptiness of the commercials words « I love you».

Melano Sokhadze

She was born May 1, 1981 in Georgia, day which seemed absolutely ordinary for her. Melano always knew that this was a workers day but she couldn't really understand what was a meaning of this day. Later on she discovered importance of her birthday date.

She grow up in the city, but going a lot in the countryside, having friends as pigs, chickens, horses and etc... After finishing school she is having a lot of confusion, she took one year off and tried to find her place in society. Finally she stopped herself in Tbilisi Fine Art Academy. Some years being in the academy she tried to understand: What is the importance of doing art and finally when she found group of people that worked on some interesting issues in the academy, she start understand what could be use of art in the society. She found interesting students in fine art and together they create group "lott". Having interesting and useful 3 year together and diploma exhibition, things had to be change.

In 2009 She was accepted in Geneva University of Art and Design. So she moved form Georgia, leave back everything and since this time she lives and works in Geneva. She is still trying to find out what is the use of art for the struggle of equal society.

Violentine's Day

Melano Sokhadze is the organizer of the project "Valenite's Day". She works together with the participants, trying to work collectively and break the normal understanding of the curator, were during the preparation of the exhibition artists work only for their individual works and curator cares about all. Each participant write about their works and decides what and how organize space. Create common exposition for all works. Finally this project is about trust and taking collective responsibility.

Fresh Cut

(This sentence is common use in the flower business to advertise the fresh flower quality. To emphasize efficiency of the company that cuts flowers in the early morning outside of the country (mainly factories are based in third countries) and late in the evening you have them in the flower shops)

The work made out of the roses from Africa.

This work will show how oppressed workers being used for the privet benefits. It will show the gap between powerful and powerless society.

Flowers are beautiful and having special quality. People like Flowers. They use them to decorate their houses to make nice ambiance or gave to beloved ones to express their positive feelings to them. It's kind of emotional object of desire. When we give them to the one we want for the "Valentine's Day" we are saying that we have love deep in our hard. Here comes there question: Will roses have the same pure quality after knowing from where and how there are in our hands in order to say I Love you?